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ABSTRACT

The methods used to determine the educational needs and goals of the Pine Ridge Reservation (South Dakota) are described in this article. The development and assessment of a questionnaire involved school boards, administrators, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Educational Administrator, teachers, students, parents, and other interested community members. Administered by many of these same people (in the Lakota language if necessary), the final needs questionnaire not only determined educational priorities, but also strengthened school-community relationship. Each community and group within each community were analyzed; comparisons were made of Indian versus non-Indian priorities; and significant differences among group priorities were given. The 11 goal areas (total survey results) listed from most to least important based on the average ranking given are shown. Significant differences were shown in the top five goals. Itemized in priority order these were: (1) parents--continuing education, communication skills, citizenship preparation, cultural heritage, values; (2) students--continuing education, communication skills, job preparation, citizenship preparation, cultural heritage; (3) teachers--communication skills, values, people relationships, job preparation, citizenship preparation. The critical step in the assessment was the utilization of the findings in the daily process of the schools. Many alternative approaches were possible, and each school had to determine what was most appropriate for it. The Needs Assessment Questionnaire concluded the document. (AH)

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THEME: SCHOOLS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

The fifth issue of the BIA Education Research Bulletin places particular emphasis on works done by professional educators relative to quality of education programs. The Bureau is and always has had the upmost concern with high quality teaching for the Indian youngsters in the Bureau schools. This issue is devoted to that purpose of ever pursuing a better approach to teaching and the improvement of the profession of teaching.

Mr. Lary Shafer's study of group differentiation of teachers on the Papago reservation in which he compares the BIA teachers with public school teachers addresses itself to that issue of teacher competency and instructional improvement.

Beverly Anderson's educational needs assessment on Pine Ridge reservation and the student dropout study at Ft. Wingate High School both address themselves to the improvement of educational services to Indian people. When a school such as Wingate High School conducts an internal study for self-improvement and unbiasedly makes its findings available to the public, then we can feel assured that there are educators with full commitments to improve our educational system.

Lloyd New points out the importance of taking into consideration the cultural differences that most certainly accounts for basic learning foundation among many Indian students. These differences, if recognized and nurtured properly, can provide the impetus necessary for creative expression.

This particular issue of the *BIA Research Bulletin* will receive evaluation examination from the BIA Research Council who have the role of an editorial review board later this summer. The board will seek ways to improve the type and quality of information that the bulletin will carry to the readers.

Clennon E. Sockey

Director

PINE RIDGE RESERVATION ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Beverly L. Anderson

The recent determination of educational goals for the Pine Ridge Reservation schools is an example of how a school system can benefit in a variety of ways from parent, teacher, and student involvement in policy establishment. The process was by no means without complication, but useful results were definitely realized. This explanation of the process may help others recognize the need for such a process within their schools and provide some guidelines for successful implementation.

PROCEDURE

Several basic steps from the defining of educational goals to the utilization of prioritized goals were taken. The final and critical step was, and continues to be, the application of the goals to the school's daily activities.

Definition of Goals. For about three years, school administrators and education directors on the reservation met monthly with a management consultant for training in management and organizational development. Out of these meetings developed an increasing concern for determining the most serious needs in the schools.

In April 1973 school board members, school administrators, program directors from the boarding school and eight day schools, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Educational Program Administrator for the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota met for a two-day session to take a serious look at the direction their schools were taking and their leadership role in the process. One of their first topics of discussion was the educational goals of the school. It did not take them long to discover that they did not have specific goals for what pupils should learn.

They felt a need to determine what areas of content were considered to be most important by not only themselves but also by parents, teachers and students. If they knew this, they could then begin to focus their attention on areas of greatest priority and upgrade the schools based on this information.

Thus began a process of defining goals. They began by "brainstorming" to come up with what they thought a pupil should know by the time he finishes high school. After much discussion and listing of desired skills and knowledge they decided upon several goal areas—general categories of knowledge a pupil should have before leaving high school. (These categories are referred to as the educational goals in the remainder of this article.)

About this same time, several of the educational leaders attended a needs assessment workshop in another state. Information was gathered from other schools which had conducted needs assessments. Also, attention was directed toward the aspects of the local situation which were unique to the reservation.

The step of defining goals produced more than just educational goals. It produced a working relationship among administrators and personal ownership of, and commitment to, the goals. The best of plans all too often fail when imposed from the outside.

Redefining of Goals. The goals as defined by administrators were compiled, printed, and distributed to teachers to review and make desired additions. Again, this step was viewed as crucial for enlisting the support and involvement of a key group of people in any educational institution—the teachers. It also provided a stimulus for discussion among teachers, administrators and other school personnel.

Compiling of Results and Redefining of Goals (Again!). At the end of the school year (May 1973) a small group of people compiled the results of all the information gathered from school personnel involved thus far. Finally 11 goal areas were developed with several subareas of knowledge to be taught under each goal.

At their monthly meeting in May, the Unified School Board members (a board consisting of the chairman of each of the local school boards on the reservation) and school administrators de-

cided to next present the goals to students, teachers, and the community. Thus the goal areas needed to be written in a form which could be easily understood by people in each of these groups. The set of goals and descriptions (some of which were in rather technical language not readily understood by those outside the educational profession) were rewritten in a more readable form to serve as the basis for a questionnaire.

During the summer months this step was completed resulting in a questionnaire to be given to parents, teachers, and students in grades 8-12. See Table 1 for the questionnaire used and the 11 goal areas.

It was found that perhaps the most important aspect of this step are to know (1) what kind of information it is that you want from the people being surveyed and (2) the characteristics of the people.

Too often people are not sure what they want to know and resort to a shotgun approach to information gathering; they hope that by asking enough questions they will hit on the information they wanted. The probability of the success of such an approach is distressingly low. Also, questionnaires are often designed and administered with little thought about what will be done with the information. It is wise to go through the early draft of a needs assessment form (or any questionnaire) and consider the following questions:

- (1) Specifically, what is it that I want to learn from the people being surveyed?
- (2) Will the questions I now have give me this information?
- (3) Are there questions here which are not contributing to gathering the information I need?

In addition to defining what information one wants, it is equally critical to understand the people who will be responding to the questionnaire. Consider these questions:

- (1) Will a person who has not been involved at all understand the terminology?
- (2) Did I include enough background information about why

I am asking them these questions? (If they do not understand why the questions are being asked, many people may be suspicious or uninterested and not respond with care and honesty.)

- (3) Is the vocabulary of the directions and questions appropriate for the people to be surveyed?

In the development of the Pine Ridge survey, a sixth grade teacher and local people well acquainted with the vocabulary and colloquialism of the people, critiqued the questionnaire to insure its appropriateness for students and parents.

Administration of Questionnaire. The September meeting of Unified School Board members, school administrators and other involved personnel began with a lengthy critique of the questionnaire which had been developed. Each person answered the questionnaire himself, not only to express their own opinions about the goals, but also to determine where there may be problems of interpretation in the questionnaire. Then groups of four or five people discussed several questions:

- (1) Are there directions or questions which are going to require further explanation?
- (2) Is the questionnaire too difficult?
- (3) What will the results tell us?
- (4) How many people in each group (students, parents, and teachers) should be given the questionnaire?
- (5) How should the questionnaire be distributed?

Several important results came out of the discussions of these questions. Not only was it decided how to administer the questionnaire, but administrators and school board members were better prepared to respond to questions.

Rather than simply mail questionnaires to people, each school administrator explained the needs assessment to his teachers. Teachers answered the questionnaire themselves and then administered the questionnaire to 8-12 grade students and to designated parents. Each administrator compiled an alphabetical list of par-

ents of students in their school and then selected every fourth parent. Teachers were then assigned, or volunteered, to contact each of these parents. School board members and other local people were available to assist in locating parents and in interpreting questions into the Lakota language where necessary.

This process was seen as important in the total process of implementing constructive change in the schools. The administration of the questionnaire was not an isolated step in determining goals, but rather an integral part of the process of building school-community relations. The questionnaire not only provided information concerning educational priorities but served as a vehicle for teachers to meet parents and get acquainted with the home situation of their students.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

All questionnaires were returned by teachers to principals who then sent them to the person responsible for collecting, coding, and computer analyzing the results. The results were analyzed in several ways. Priorities were established (based on the average ranks given the goals) for (1) all the people who completed the questionnaire, (2) the 174 parents only, (3) the 267 students only and (4) the 129 teachers only. (The order of the goals for these groups is detailed in Table 2.) The same was done for each community which participated and each group within each community. Comparisons were made of Indian versus non-Indian priorities, and significant differences among groups were determined.

The 11 goals areas listed from most to least important based on the average ranks given them by all respondents were:

Table 2

Average Ranks of the 11 Goal Areas for (1) All Respondents, (2) Parents Only, (3) Students Only, and (4) Teachers Only

All	Parents (174)	Students (267)	Teachers (129)
2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
—CS (4.4)	—CE (4.2)	—CE (3.9)	—CS (2.6)
—CE (4.7)		—CS (4.7)	—V (4.8)
		—JP (4.9)	—PR (5.6)
—JP (5.5)	—CS (5.3)	—CP (5.3)	JP (5.6)
—CP (5.6)	—CP (5.8)	—CH (5.7)	
	CH (5.9)	—PR (5.8)	
	V (5.9)		

(Continued)

(Table 2 Continued)

Average Ranks of the 11 Goal Areas for (1) All Respondents, (2) Parents Only, (3) Students Only, and (4) Teachers Only

All	Parents (174)	Students (267)	Teachers (129)
6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
—V (6.1)			—CP (6.1)
CH (6.1)			—MH (6.2)
—PR (6.2)	—JP (6.4)	—PH (6.5)	—NS (6.4)
		—V (6.8)	—PH (6.5)
		—EU (6.9)	—CE (6.7)
7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
—PH (7.0)	—PR (7.6)	—MH (7.2)	—CH (7.1)
—MH (7.1)	—NS (7.7)	—NS (7.3)	
—NS (7.2)	—MH (7.8)		
—EU (7.5)	—EU (7.9)		
8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
	—PH (8.2)		—EU (8.3)
9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0

Note—The numeral in parenthesis after each goal is the average rank. Remember, the one with the lowest average rank (at the top of each graph) is the one considered most important.

- (1) Communication Skills (CS)
- (2) Continuing Education (CE)
- (3) Job Preparation (JP)
- (4) Citizenship Preparation (CP)
- (5) Values (V)
- (6) Cultural Heritage (CH)
- (7) People Relationships (PR)
- (8) Physical Health (PH)
- (9) Mental Health (MH)
- (10) Number Skills (NS)
- (11) Economic Use of Personal and Community Resources (EU)

For just parents, the top five goals were:

- (1) Continuing Education
- (2) Communication Skills
- (3) Citizenship Preparation
- (4) Cultural Heritage
- (5) Values

For just students, the top five goals were:

- (1) Continuing Education
- (2) Communication Skills
- (3) Job Preparation
- (4) Citizenship Preparation
- (5) Cultural heritage

For just teachers, the top five goals were:

- (1) Communication Skills
- (2) Values
- (3) People Relationships
- (4) Job Preparation
- (5) Citizenship Preparation

At the November meeting of the Unified School Board members and school administrators, the results were presented and discussed. During this session of "massaging the data" several interesting similarities and differences were discussed. Some of these points were:

- (1) Parents and students ranked Continuing Education highest and teachers ranked it ninth.

- (2) Parents ranked Cultural Heritage and Values almost the same, students ranked them a little further apart, and teachers ranked them very far apart. (See Table 2.) In discussing these differences, it was suggested that Indians (98% of the parents were Indian) considered these two topics as very much the same whereas non-Indians (79% of the teachers were non-Indian) tended to view these as two quite different topics.
- (3) Non-Indians rated Communication Skills and Values significantly higher (.05 level of significance) than Indians did. Indians rated Continuing Education, Cultural Heritage, Economic Use of Personal and Community Resources significantly higher (.01 level) than non-Indians did. (See Table 3 for the percent of Indian and non-Indian respondents.)
- (4) Teachers rated Communication Skills significantly higher (.01 level) than parents did. They also rated People Relationships, Mental Health and Physical Health higher (.05 level) than did parents. Parents rated Continuing Education and Cultural Heritage higher (.01 level) than teachers did.

Possible reasons for these differences and the practical significance of such differences were discussed.

Table 3

Percent of Indian and Non-Indian Respondents in Each Category

	Parents	Students	Teachers	All
Indian	98%	95%	21%	80%
Non-Indian	2%	5%	79%	20%

UTILIZATION OF RESULTS

Herein lies the critical step. Now that it is known that parents, students and teachers view certain goals as most important, how does that affect the daily process of the schools? Many alternative approaches are possible and each school must determine what is most appropriate. Some alternatives which were considered and/or implemented among the Pine Ridge personnel were:

- (1) Since the questionnaire used was general and provided limited information on specific changes that were needed or desired, it was considered useful by several schools to develop a more specific questionnaire for their own locality to obtain further input.
- (2) Forms were made available for looking at how the school budget and/or school staff were allocated among the goal areas. This was considered as one way to determine how the school's present resources are being distributed among the goal areas. Congruencies and discrepancies among the determined goal priorities and the present resource allocations became apparent.
- (3) Curriculum changes which already were in process were re-evaluated and expanded based on the determined priorities.

The process used in one school system began with a three day meeting of administrators and other staff away from the local situation to plan implementation. Timelines and specific activities were established along with re-evaluation check points. Committees were formed for actively pursuing the building of K-12 skills continuums and establishing more definite course requirements at the high school level to improve the students' ability to obtain jobs or continue their education beyond high school. Other schools and organizations which were building skills continuums or developing tracking systems were contacted to provide information.

During the conducting of the needs assessment many things were learned which may be useful insights for others interested in undertaking such a process in their schools. For example:

- (1) Keep the channels of communication open and flowing throughout the process. This appeared to be crucial in maintaining the interest and involvement of all concerned. Misunderstandings, resentments, and inefficiency occurred when meeting times for various groups were not properly announced or progress reports from various schools were not adequately communicated.
- (2) Recognize that not all parts of the system can proceed at the same rate. The Pine Ridge needs assessment in-

volve nine schools each with certain unique strengths and weaknesses, various degrees of stability in terms of administrative and teaching staff, different competencies among personnel and different priorities at various times within their schools and communities. Some schools were more fortunate in terms of personnel training and personal and financial resources available to them. The model established in one school was not imposed upon the other schools but rather it provided suggestions and cautions for the other schools. Care must be taken to insure that those who are to be involved in any change process feel ownership for, and involvement in the plan.

- (3) Care should be taken at each step of the process to establish timelines and responsibilities. At the monthly meetings of the educational planners, definite dates were set for completing necessary tasks. Specific persons were given responsibility for each task. When such management of the process was neglected, critical tasks were incompletely or ineffectively accomplished.
- (4) It is essential to recognize that times of apparent non-productivity will most likely occur. Rather than become discouraged and give up, use these to generate the necessary, but controlled, discontent which will again set people on the track of renewed involvement in doing quality work.

SUMMARY

Several basic steps were discussed as a model of how a Bureau of Indian Affairs school system initiated, implemented, and used the results of an educational needs assessment. Attention was focused on local involvement, management, and utilization of results.

Table 1

Needs Assessment Questionnaire

Dear Parents/Students:

The administrators of the Pine Ridge Reservation would like to

know what you want to have people teach in our schools. We have eleven areas of study which we feel are important.

Now we would like to know which of these areas you think are most important. We also want you to add other things that should be taught, if you think we left out some important ones.

Please do not put your name on the questionnaire.

Thank you very much. Your answers to these questions will be very helpful to us in improving our schools.

What district do you live in?
(check one)

Oglala _____
Pine Ridge _____
Wanblee _____
Kyle _____
Manderson _____
Porcupine _____
Allen _____

Check if you are:

Indian _____
Non-Indian _____

Check if you are a:

Parent _____
Student _____

Parents: How many children do you have in: (write in the number)

Grade School _____

High School _____

Students: What grade are you in? _____

Listed below are the things which administrators feel students should know in these 11 areas. Read through these and see if you agree. If there are some which you feel should *not* be taught, cross them out. If there are ones which should be added fill them in on the blanks under each area.

Citizenship Preparation

- Will vote in local elections
 - Know what services in the community can help him and his family
 - Know his legal rights
 - Understand how he can help or hurt his community
-
-

Communication Skills

- Be able to read and understand magazines and newspapers
 - Desire to continue to read by himself
 - Develop a useful vocabulary
 - Communicate effectively in speaking and writing
-
-

Continuing Education

- Know how to apply for college and other education after high school
 - Know how to study and use libraries
 - Know how to get money for further education
 - Be prepared in other courses such as biology, physics, chemistry, etc.
-
-

Cultural Heritage

- Get to know and have pride in Teton Sioux and overall Indian History and Culture
 - Understand prejudice and how to deal with it
 - Understand other people and cultures in the U.S.
-
-

Economic Use of Personal and Community Resources

- Know and understand use of reservation land like leasing, ownership, uses and value of land
 - Know and understand use of credit, insurance, taxes, savings and management of land
 - Know and understand the legal issues involved concerning reservation land
-
-

People Relationships

- Understand people with different ideas and personalities without fighting
 - Understand marriage and other male/female relationships
-
-

Mental Health

- Understand his own personality
 - Know how to deal with his own feelings
 - Know where to get mental health help if needed
-
-

Number Skills

- Know how to add, subtract, multiply and divide and how to use these in everyday life
 - Know math well enough to take math courses in college if he or she wants to go to college
-
-

Job Preparation

- Be trained in a specific vocational skill if he wants to
 - Be able to choose according to his own interests and abilities between college, military service, working, or vocational or technical training
-
-

Physical Health

- Know when and how to get medical health
 - Understand the effects of alcohol and drugs on the body
 - Know what a good diet is and why it is needed
 - Girls will understand pregnancies and prenatal and post-natal care
-
-

Values

- Know how to deal with moral problems
 - Understand that he is a valuable person
 - Understand that other people are valuable
-
-